

Emotional tug-of-war erupts into mass violence

By TIM REITERMAN
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SAN FRANCISCO — "I feel sorry that we are being destroyed from within," the Rev. Jim Jones said as a tropical storm rained on the Peoples Temple pavilion.

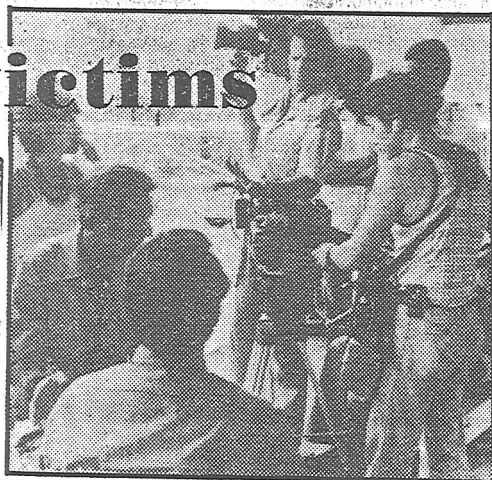
Jones had suffered a setback. Rep. Leo Ryan, D-Calif., had come to the temple's agricultural project to determine whether the followers of Rev. Jones were free to leave the jungle settlement.

Starting with a note from two members asking, "Please help us get out of Jonestown," the list of defectors grew to at least 16. According to former members, Jones would not tolerate defections from the mission project and many of the church members considered those who leave to be traitors.

At the end of Ryan's two-day visit to the mission Saturday, a woman suddenly charged down a slippery boardwalk, crying, "Don't take my baby!"

An emotional tug-of-war ensued between a mother who wanted to stay and the father who wanted to go. Finally, attorneys for both Ryan and the temple decreed that the courtroom was the proper place to decide the custody issue.

Though it was a stalemate, the incident intensified an already strained situation. Jones, who asked his followers to call him "Dad," does not like to lose any of



world news

his "children." He says he considers it a failing on his part when he does.

Some scowling faces appeared in the windows that rainy afternoon, watching the defectors leave, some with trunks and others with little more than the clothes on their backs.

Soon the back of the truck was piled high with crates, suitcases, backpacks and people. Mud made the truck bed slick, so everyone clung to the sideboards.

But before it could start out, we heard angry shouts. People scrambled for the outdoor pavilion.

A few reporters jumped from the truck and ran over there, along the way getting word that a temple member had grabbed the congressman, held a knife to his throat and announced plans to slit it. Temple attorneys Charles Garry and Mark Lane, along with Ryan, subdued the man.

Fresh in everyone's mind was the temple's magnanimity: It willingly provided passports to those who wished to leave and advanced \$5,000 to help defray transportation costs. Also fresh in mind were the warm, cheerful embraces between some of those leaving and some who were staying.

As the larger of two planes being used landed, the temple truck, with several persons in the back, started to advance. Alongside it was a red tractor and trailer seen earlier at the mission.

Some of those leaving the temple eyed the vehicles with suspicion. NBC reporter Don Harris said coolly, "I think we're in for some trouble."

Seating assignments were chosen after Ryan briefed the press on the knife attack and credited Mark Lane with saving his life.

The congressman clearly was in good spirits. He was within a few minutes and a few yards of accomplishing his goal: to get out temple members who were afraid to leave or possibly held against their will.

First the Cessna was filled, with Ryan frisking each boarder looking for guns and knives.

Meanwhile the tractor, with several men in the trailer, rolled toward the terminal shack and halted a short distance away.

Then, with a heart-stopping suddenness, the first shot was fired.

Lawyer flees camp as 409, smiling, end lives as followers

By The Associated Press

GEORGETOWN, Guyana — "We are all going to die now," the religious cultist told Mark Lane. "They were smiling," Lane recalled.

The next day 300 to 400 persons were found dead at the camp of the People's Temple in Guyana's tropical wilderness, apparently after taking home-brewed poison.

Lane and another American lawyer, Charles Garry, fled through the jungle Saturday as screams from the camp reverberated in their ears.

"I got out as the killing was taking place," Lane told The Associated Press on Monday after he arrived in this capital city, 150 miles southeast of the camp.

Lane said Jones, whose followers reportedly had long considered suicide if they felt the sect was threatened, held a mass meeting Saturday to discuss it.

"Jones knew I would speak out against the suicide.

or the killings at the meeting," Lane said. He said Jones ordered a guard put on him and Garry in an area some distance from the meeting.

It was not clear whether the ambush of Ryan's group had already taken place when the meeting was called, or the camp residents were debating going ahead with the ambush.

"I had just prevented a killing of Congressman Ryan, so he sent the man who tried to kill Congressman Ryan to act as a guard on Garry and myself. I got the point quickly."

Lane was referring to a cultist who had lunged at Ryan with a knife in the camp Saturday. Lane and Garry seized the young man, stabbing him in the process, a survivor from Ryan's party reported later.

He said he told them someone should be spared to report the mass suicide to the outside world, so they allowed him and Garry to escape.